

About the ISE

Established in 1974 and incorporated in 1981, the Institute for Social Ecology (ISE) is an independent institution of higher education dedicated to the study of social ecology, an interdisciplinary field drawing on philosophy, political and social theory, anthropology, history, economics, the natural sciences, and feminism. The ISE offers intensive summer programs, a B.A. and M.A. degree program in affiliation with Burlington College and Prescott College respectively, workshops on issues such as biotechnology, fall and winter lecture series, internship opportunities, and a speakers bureau. ISE's campus also plays host to art exhibits, conferences, and other events. In addition, the ISE is involved in research, publishing, and activist projects—including the ISE Biotechnology Project.

As both an educational and activist organization, the ISE is committed to the social and ecological transformation of society. It is the ISE's core belief that the human potential to play a creative role in natural and social evolution can be realized, thereby allowing us to foster communities free from hierarchy, social inequity, and ecological degradation.

The ISE has been a pioneer in the exploration of ecological means of food production, like organic gardening and permaculture, and alternative technologies. The ISE, as such, strives to be an agent of social transformation, demonstrating the skills, ideas, and relationships that can nurture vibrant, self-governed, ecological communities.

Join Us!

For over 29 years, from the antinuclear and ecology movements to the current one against the bleak side of globalization, the ISE has inspired individuals involved in social change to work toward a humane, ecological, and liberatory society. More than 3,000 students from around the globe—from Liberia to the Philippines, Italy to Iran, Norway to Uruguay, Israel to Ethiopia, the United States to Japan, and more—have attended the ISE in order to not only remake themselves but remake society as well.



Institute for Social Ecology

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Popular Education for a Free Society
Plainfield, Vermont

Programs

Social Ecology suggests that the solutions to the ecological crisis will require a new approach to social life, one which is based in humanly scaled, decentralized, democratic communities. To this end, the ISE offers its internationally known programs. The purpose of the ISE's programs is the preparation of well-rounded students who can work effectively as participants in ecological and social reconstruction. Our programs present both a comprehensive exploration of the critical problems we face and a reconstructive perspective focusing on the process of ecologically oriented social change. Moreover, the ISE emphasizes a progressive education model that attempts to empower students through the learning process itself.

B.A. in Social Ecology

Burlington College, in collaboration with the ISE, offers a B.A. in an individualized major in social ecology. Degree tracks in social ecology currently include alternative agriculture and food systems; social and political theory; activism, organizing and community development; ecological design, building, and land practices; and popular education.

M.A. in Social Ecology

In affiliation with the ISE, Prescott College, a leading progressive institution based in Prescott, Arizona, is offering an M.A. degree in social ecology. This innovative new program will allow students to attend courses at the ISE as a part of their studies through Prescott's low-residency Master of Arts Program. Possible areas of study will include social theory; ecological and social activism; ecological design, building, and land practices; ecofeminism and other ecophilosophies; science and technology studies; globalization; community development; food

systems and agricultural policy; ecological alternatives in education; environmental issues and politics; and a broad range of individually designed interdisciplinary studies.

Sustainable Design, Building, and Land Use

Since its inception, the ISE has offered experiential studies in land use alternatives and sustainable technologies. This summer program includes instruction in permaculture, organic agriculture, community design, ecological building, and forest ecology, while fostering a critical understanding of the social and political contexts in which these alternatives may be applied.

Art, Activism, and Social Change

This summer program is intended for artists and activists who wish to gain practical experience with designing and composing art projects that are informed by their politics in content, form, and practice. Over the course of the program, students receive hands-on experience and exposure to a wide array of activist art.

Ecology and Community

The ISE's Ecology and Community program offers an intensive educational experience each summer in the field of social ecology. This interdisciplinary program explores; social ecology, nature philosophy, community development, political theory, social movements and activism, popular education, radical agriculture, capitalism and globalization, racism, feminism, and more.

Theoretical Inquiries in the Age of Globalization

This eight-day summer intensive focuses on areas such as philosophy, social and political theory, and history as part of a scholarly inquiry into the "age of globalization." To that end, this program (open only to current ISE degree students and

alumni) draws on a variety of radical traditions, revolutionary histories, and social and political analyses from the libertarian Left.

Fall and Spring Workshop and Lecture Series

This free and public seasonal series typically includes workshops and lectures on basic and advanced gardening techniques, agriculture and food security issues, ecological philosophy, and much more. By utilizing our campus as a demonstration site, this series aims to educate people about the relationship between human communities and their environment.

Projects

Besides our year-round educational programs, the Institute for Social Ecology is involved in several ongoing projects.

The Biotechnology Project is dedicated to grassroots education and direct action to highlight the problems of biotechnology in our society and to illustrate and promote ecological alternatives. The Biotechnology Project also helps facilitate the Northeast Resistance Against Genetic Engineering (NeRage) network by providing support and resources to individuals and grassroots groups throughout the northeastern United States and Canada.

The Social Ecology Speakers Bureau brings together some of the most influential activists and educators working with social ecology today. Available for lectures and workshops, our speakers provide a coherent, radical critique of current political and social trends, while offering a reconstructive, community-based, and ethical approach to social life.